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BOSTON CORRESPONDENCE.

THREATENED DESTRUCTION OF THE STATE HOUSE DOME—MR. KITSON'S SCULPTURE—THE JOHNSTON MEMORIAL EXHIBITION.

ONE would think that if any public building were held in veneration in Boston, it would be that one which bears the gilded dome—that dome which suggested to Dr. O. W. Holmes the immortal mot, "Hub of the Universe" so aptly and compactly expressing Boston, as Boston thinks of herself. The State House being on the very top of Beacon Hill, its dome is hence "poised just in the right place," as Henry James happily phrases it in one of his pictures of Boston, in "A New England Winter," to form the hub and centre-piece of the whole fair metropolis as it lies stretching away farther and farther each year between the Bay and Charles River. Seen from any point or any distance where it can be seen at all, the New England capital always seems to extend equally on all sides in its outline of a gentle and graceful incline from this golden knob, always golden in the sun although the distance may have reduced the fair bulk of the dome to a mere point. Domes are not so plentiful in America, or in the world, having been neglected by contemporary architecture, perhaps for good reasons, that any one of them can be uselessly destroyed. Boston should be last of all, one would say, to part with an object beautiful in itself, and endeared by sentiment and association to Boston pride and patriotism. But the restless spirit of improvement, that species of rustic selectmen's ambition, which smartens up a place by tearing down old mansions and cutting down old elms to straighten and widen streets, or line them with brand-new, vulgar and pretentious wooden Italian villas, or frame-blocks with shingled mansard roofs, has got its eye upon this venerable pile, and it will be a miraculous providence if it escapes. The powers that be at the State House are rural, not urban, and the elm-and-mansion-destroying enterprise that has wreaked itself on so many fine old New England towns is likely in the end to have its way with the "Hub of the Universe." "Is it not eighty or ninety years old," the building committee ask, "and, therefore, is it not time to have something new?" What has probably sealed the doom of the building was the realization after a trial, that the old beams would not bear the strain of a modern "elevator." This seems to have settled it. The motif of the new structure, therefore, being an "elevator," it ought to be one of those thirteen-story monstrosities of architecture which illustrate the income to be derived through modern invention and insolence from a bit of city land. The plans for rebuilding which find most favor with the state Solons, who are settling the matter in the teeth of the almost unanimous opposition of the citizens of Boston, are those of architects whose skill has heretofore been most signally displayed in school-houses, engine-houses, and other municipal edifices, and in business blocks and apartment houses, where the end aimed at and achieved was to get the largest possible number of rentable rooms. This whole subject of architecture and art will have to be taken up and settled before we can be said to have any sure hold on civilization in the republic. In the elder days when the State House was built by that finely representative Boston scholar and gentleman, Bulfinch (author and artist as well as architect), the gentlemen had not altogether lost their grip in public affairs. With the change that we now know, but which we submit to and pay roundly for rather than take the trouble to manage our "primaries," a State art commission of some kind has become an absolute necessity. Some rich man should offer a prize for a plan for national, state and municipal art commissions that will save us and our children's children from bad public buildings, monuments and statues. It is no trifling matter.

One of the concrete illustrations of the familiar truth that genius starves while mediocrity flourishes is the young sculptor, H. H. Kitson, whose delightful bronze, "La Musique de la Mer," which you may remember as standing in one of the corners at the Morgan exhibition and sale, and which in the Paris Salon was mentioned for honors by the jury, has been on exhibition here during the past six weeks. Here is a work recalling the very best periods of the art of which it is an example, so true in modelling, so nervous in muscle and vivacious in expression that it seems veritably alive, and *because* it is so true and is not in the conventionally smooth and impossibly symmetrical contours of form and limb, judged proper by Mr. and Mrs. Moneybags for parlor furniture,

it may go begging for a purchaser among the wealthy connoisseurs of Boston and New England. It is some satisfaction to hear that there is a bare chance of this rare sculptor receiving a commission to execute the proposed statue or monument of the late Mayor Doyle, of Providence. He has lately taken a studio in the Cowles Art School, so that, at all events, the influence of his fresh and bold style, that is so happily representative of the most hopeful tendency of modern art—the return to nature and reality—will not be quite missing, although he may not have the encouragement to production which a community more intelligent and liberal as regards art would give such an artist. Truly the sculptors seem to have fallen upon evil times. Was there ever an age of the world in which they received so little encouragement as at present? The best authority on archæology at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Mr. Robinson, is said to be inclining to the conclusion as the result of much study in Greece and Italy, in Athens, Pompeii and Rome, as well as in the museums of Europe, that the great statues of the best classical periods were all tinted to the life. Is there not here suggested a way out for the modern sculptor? Let him color his portrait in marble of Mrs. or Miss Centpercent, even to the crushed-strawberry satin, or the orange-blossoms of the bridal veil, and sculpture must fairly "boom" again!

The memorial exhibition of John B. Johnston's works is one of the most deeply interesting events of the winter. Poor Johnston died so young that he is hardly to be blamed for not having accomplished more, but the quality atones for what is lacking in quantity of what he has left behind. It piques the mind with a constant questioning of what might have been in store for him and for the world. Perhaps, however, this was all—and, indeed, it would have been enough were it so—for the artists and for those who can see and feel with the artists. Born and reared among artists—his father a famous caricaturist, a sort of local Cruikshank here half a century ago, and his sisters flourishing teachers of art, their school befriended and inspired by W. M. Hunt—he was a painter pure and simple, without the strain of sophistication for business or advertising purposes. He would not, probably could not, paint to sell; he cared nothing for making himself acceptable or even intelligible to the great public, but painted for himself and for the sympathetic few who surrounded him, or frequented his sisters' studio and school. Seasons and years would go by and the same few pictures of green fields and rosy skies, of cattle and calves would reappear just a little retouched and improved so as to reflect more and more of the subtle insight he had as to the component elements of the color in a sunset or its reflection, or of the humor in some motherly cow or bumptious bull calf that he had been lying in wait for or following up week after week while other thrifter, but less genuine, artists were producing "finished" work for the market. With him a thing that he loved was never finished and never could be. That sense of humor which he inherited from the caricaturist Johnston, and the true tenderness that is always ready to well out of fine humor, opened up to him new possibilities of expressing the meaning of things in earth and sky and animals that continually teased him for utterance, and now make his works perfect memorials of his spirit and manner of work. This is a sort of thing that to the fit audience, though few, attracted by his painting, is infinitely more precious than the technique which he might have acquired had he not been after something else.

GRETA.

PARIS CORRESPONDENCE.

THE GIFT OF THE WONDERFUL CHANTILLY COLLECTION—A GREAT EVENT IN ARCHÆOLOGICAL ART.

BY the gift of Chantilly to the Institute of France, the French nation comes into possession of an exquisite architectural monument, a precious library and some wonderful pictures and drawings, both by ancient and modern masters. The Duc d'Aumale, in forming his collection, did not yield to any exclusive mania; he sought to get first-class things of all kinds, and he did not seem to care what price he paid. Thus his last folly was a diptych by Memling, which he bought of Thibaudau, of London, for 250,000 francs. The two Raphaels at Chantilly may be estimated freely at a million francs, although the Duc d'Aumale did not pay that price. One of them, known as the "Vierge d'Orleans," and which had formerly belonged to the Orleans family, was bought

by the Duke at the Delessert sale, in 1869, for 150,000 francs. It is one of the finest productions of Raphael's first Roman period. The second Raphael, which the Duke bought three years ago, is a picture *six inches* square, representing the "Three Graces," inspired by an antique marble which Raphael saw at Sienna when he went to help Pinturricchio paint his frescoes. For this little panel the Duc d'Aumale paid 600,000 francs. The collection is rich in early masters. Van Eyck, Giotto, Ansano di Pietro, Fra Angelico, Lippo Lippi, Botticelli—a "Virgin" and "Autumn"—Pollajuolo, Lorenzo di Nicolo, are all well represented.

The pictures of the French school are the real glory of Chantilly. The collection of portraits of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, by Clouet, Dumoustier and Quesnel, is simply unique; even the Louvre has nothing to compare with it. Among the portraits of the seventeenth century are Mignard's Molière; Corneille, by François de Troy; Mazarin, by Philippe de Champagne; Louis XIV., by Rigaud. The French painters of the eighteenth century are represented by four fine Watteaus, a Lancret, four heads by Greuze, and three famous works by Prudhon—a "Nymph," the "Awakening of Psyche," and "Homage to Beauty." The modern French pictures at Chantilly comprise five works by Ingres, which appear now rather old-fashioned; works by Gerard, Géricault and Gros; the "Two Foscari" and a "Moroccan Sentinel," by Delacroix; three Marillhats; ten Decamps, including the "Corps de Garde" of the Salon of 1834, for which was paid 80,000 francs; a Fromentin, several Meissoniers, the "Assassination of the Duc de Guise," which Delaroche considered to be his masterpiece, twelve decorative panels by the late Paul Baudry, Gérôme's "Duel after the Ball," and innumerable works by contemporary artists. Add to this an immense collection of drawings, a library of which the riches are literally unknown, for the Duc d'Aumale did not care to show his books. The gift of Chantilly is really magnificent, whatever reserves we may make as to some of the old masters and the modern masters, too.

A great event, from the point of view of the archæology of art and of the history of ornamental art, is the arrival at the Museum of the Louvre of fragments of the decoration of the palace of Artaxerxes and Darius, discovered at Susa, and brought to France by the Dieulafoy mission. The object of this mission was to excavate the Apadāna, or throne room of Artaxerxes Mnemon, which was first visited by Sir A. Loftus, and to reconstitute the palaces at Susa of Artaxerxes and Darius. The campaign of M. and Mme. Dieulafoy, in 1885 and 1886, has fully realized this programme, and enabled them to determine exactly the construction and appearance of the Apadāna of Artaxerxes, which the Greeks considered to be the most complete architectonic whole ever built by the Persian monarchs. Among the most important vestiges discovered are the friezes in enamelled faïence, especially those on which are represented the royal guards of Darius. These friezes are in excellent preservation, and the colors of the enamel are as brilliant as if they had just come out of the potter's furnace. The enamel is as fine as the finest work of Lucca della Robbia, and the coloration of a more delicate tone. The turquoise blue, the marigold yellow, the pale green and the dark green, clouded like moss agate, which dominate in the coloration of these enamels, are most exquisite. The modelling of the figures in low relief shows a skill and a science equal to that of the best Greek artists. Greek art was certainly influenced by the archaic art of Asia. May not Persian art have been subjected to a reflex influence of Greek art? M. Heuzey, director of the antiques of the Louvre, calls attention, in this connection, to a passage of the elder Pliny, who mentions a Greek sculptor "whose works are comparable to those of Myron and Polyclètes, and whose glory," adds Pliny, "is not so widespread in the world as it deserves to be, because he passed the greater part of his life in the service of Darius and Xerxes." This artist is Telephanes, of Phocæa.

I had the privilege of seeing a part of these precious discoveries in the storerooms of the Louvre recently, and I can only say that the charm of the coloration and the perfection of the modelling and execution are astonishing. The importance of the results of the Dieulafoy mission can hardly be exaggerated. The arrangement of the fragments in the Louvre will take many months, and consequently the new Persian rooms will probably not be open to the public before the autumn.

THEODORE CHILD.